



News from the Office of ERIE COUNTY EXECUTIVE MARK POLONCARZ

NEWS RELEASE

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CONTACT: Peter Anderson / Peter.Anderson@erie.gov
Phone: (716)858-8500 / Mobile: (716) 270-7842

ERIE COUNTY PROBATION AWARDED NYS GRANT FOR ATI PROGRAM

\$317,897 Award for Model Alternatives to Incarceration Program; Helps to Reduce Jail Overcrowding, Provide Supervision & Intensive Services

ERIE COUNTY, NY— The Erie County Probation Department has been awarded an Alternative to Incarceration ("ATI") grant for \$317,897 from the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services ("DCJS") following the Department's successful application in response to a Request for Proposals for a model ATI Program; Erie County's application was one of those chosen in a competitive, statewide process involving several other counties and statewide agencies also seeking the funding. The new program, completely funded by New York State, will involve both the county Probation and Mental Health departments in supervising newly-arrested offenders who are released from jail while awaiting further court proceedings and/or trial, and will connect them with appropriate services such as mental health, drug counseling, and employment training while their cases move forward.

"I commend Probation Commissioner Brian McLaughlin and his staff on receiving this grant. This demonstrates that Erie County is proactively engaged not only in providing mandated supervision, but is also striving to reduce stresses on the legal system by working with defendants prior to court appearances," **said Erie County Executive Mark C. Poloncarz.** "Overcrowding and the unnecessary costs of housing these individuals will be reduced through this effort, as defendants will be able to continue with employment or necessary drug- or mental health counseling while they await the next steps in the legal process. Providing this level of supervision as well as intensive services could well prevent more problems down the road as well."

Erie County currently conducts a Release Under Supervision ("RUS") program, which helps to reduce jail overcrowding by allowing newly-arrested offenders to remain with family and continue working or attending treatment, if necessary, while under the supervision of the Probation department. The new program will augment and intensify the existing RUS program by working with defendants who would not otherwise qualify for RUS, providing intensive supervision and services to these individuals.

"This new program will allow us to screen, identify, and work with newly arrested defendants," **said Erie County Probation Commissioner Brian McLaughlin.** "While providing them with the services they need, the program also places them under the close supervision of a Probation Officer. The objective is to help them get on track, rather than simply take up space at the Holding Center while they await trial. This will also reduce the inmate population at the Holding Center, as well as the costs of housing them there."

Under the grant, services will be provided by one Spanish-speaking Probation Officer and two case managers, working closely together and with an anticipated caseload of 40 – 50 defendants. Supervision in the form of home calls, office visits, and electronic monitoring will be provided by the Probation

department, while case managers will provide referrals to appropriate needed services. The Erie County Department of Mental Health will ensure that a high quality of service is provided by the case managers.

Erie County Mental Health Commissioner Ellery Reaves added, “The ability to link defendants to services as early in the process as possible is critical. This program not only assists in reducing wait times in the holding center, it also as greatly increases the chance for successful outcomes for defendants needing mental health and/or drug abuse counseling.”

For more information:

On the Erie County Department of Probation, visit <http://www2.erie.gov/probation/>

On the Erie County Department of Mental Health, visit <http://www2.erie.gov/mentalhealth/>

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